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FOR INL/PC KPALA AND INL/LP MARTIN

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SUBJECT: COSTA RICA MINI DUBLIN GROUP REPORT UPDATE

REF: A) STATE 73991
B) 2006 SAN JOSE 2671
C) SAN JOSE 1106
D) SAN JOSE 0999

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: This message provides an update on Dublin Group activities (per Ref A). Costa Rica continues to serve as a transit point for illegal narcotics destined to the United States and Europe from production sites in South America. At the same time, Costa Rica continues to demonstrate professionalism and reliability with its international partners in combating narcotics trafficking. The amount of cocaine seized since the start of the Arias administration (over 25 tons in 2006; approximately 20.5 metric tons metric tons to date in 2007) underscores both the success of the GOCRQs anti-drug efforts and the magnitude of the flow through the region. The United States continues to provide the majority of assistance from among the Dublin Group Donors in Costa Rica. Dublin Group members have not expressed significant concerns since our last report (Ref B). However, Costa Rica's recognition of the PRC (Ref C) cut off the GOCRQs major non-Dublin Group source of law enforcement assistance. The lost Taiwanese aid will be difficult to replace. END SUMMARY.

DRUG SITUATION AND POLICY INITIATIVES
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¶2. (U) Costa Rica continues to serve as a transit point for illegal narcotics destined to the United States and Europe from production sites in South America. Costa Rica's geographic position astride important sea routes, its large maritime area (10 times larger than its land mass), and its short distance from Colombia combine to make the country a convenient logistics platform for drug trafficking organizations moving narcotics to the United States.

¶3. (U) Costa Rica is compliant with all UN drug conventions and continues to implement its comprehensive national drug plan, drafted in 2003. Costa Rica has strict controls on precursor chemicals, although money laundering legislation has significant loopholes. There have been no legislative initiatives to address these loopholes.

¶4. (U) Costa Rica continues to demonstrate professionalism and reliability with its international partners in combating narcotics trafficking. Costa Rican authorities have aggressively investigated allegations of internal corruption and successfully prosecuted numerous officials. U.S. law enforcement agencies consider the public security forces and judicial officials to be full partners in counter-narcotics investigations and operations.

¶5. (U) The Pan-American Highway serves as a major thoroughfare for large land shipments of illicit drugs and other contraband while a lack of detection and enforcement resources at Costa Rica's international airports provide opportunities for smuggling drugs notably heroin - to the United States and Europe. Costa Rican and U.S. authorities jointly seized a record 25.5 metric tons of cocaine in Costa Rican waters or on Costa Rican vessels in 2006. The drug control police (PCD) launched a major offensive against small-time drug dealers and have dramatically increased seizures of crack cocaine. In all other drug

categories, the PCD dramatically increased seizures, often doubling or tripling 2005 amounts. For example, the PCD seized 2,464 kilograms of marijuana (881 in 2005) and 60.6 kilograms of heroin (49.38 in 2005). Seizures of MDMA/Ecstasy were 5,963 tablets in 2006 compared to only 41 tablets in 2005. Costa Rican authorities seized over \$4 million in suspect currency (\$850,000 in 2005). It should also be noted that another investigative agency, Organismo de Investigacion Judicial (OIJ) has dramatically increased its seizures this year, almost 6 metric tons of the total seizures are attributable to OIJ. All of these seizures are an example of the improved cooperation among the investigative and law enforcement agencies.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE ISSUES

16. (U) The USG continues to be the largest Dublin Group donor to Costa Rica. The most significant recent initiative has been the launch of a multi-year program to professionalize the national police (Ref D). While not focused solely on counter-narcotics, this program should better prepare the Costa Rican police force to handle law enforcement work in general, including counter-drug activities. Working with NAS Panama, an executive leadership seminar series for senior police managers began in April. The second phase began in June. In addition, the COMPSTAT management and accountability tool was introduced to senior police managers. The final component of the overall program will use a Qtrain the trainerQ model to prepare a QcommandQ cadre of 150 mid-level police managers to oversee the expanded force contemplated by GOCR Minister of Public Security Berrocal.

DUBLIN GROUP COOPERATION

17. (SBU) There are no new initiatives to report. However, outside of the Dublin Group, the most significant development has been Costa Rica's June 1 recognition of China, which abruptly ended Taiwan's extensive assistance program, including to the Public Security Ministry and police. Until Taiwan broke relations, it had provided millions in assistance to the Costa Rican police, including equipment and vehicles. We understand that more was in the pipeline on June 1, but will now not be delivered. Even some of the vehicles delivered in early 2007 are no longer in use, since the Taiwanese maintenance contracts ended when the assistance programs did. This may have implications for Dublin Group members, as the GOCR looks for alternative sources of CN and law enforcement assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.QU) There are no new Dublin Group recommendations to report. However, bilaterally, we are encouraging the GOCR to continue the same pattern of close cooperation with US judicial and law enforcement authorities. New initiatives, such as improving K-9 unit capabilities with the help of the National Guard State Partnership Program with New Mexico and continuing efforts such as the eight joint U.S. Coast Guard/Navy-Costa Rica Coast Guard Operations this year, are examples.

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